

# Green Screen is Not Just for Video



by [Chris Converse](#)

POSTED ON 01-14-2019

Adobe Products in this article



Using green or blue screens is an industry standard technique for silhouetting actors and elements from their environment. This allows video editors to replace their backgrounds with anything you can imagine. This technique, however, is not limited to video and filmmakers, nor is it limited to just green or blue.

We can use this same technique in a photo studio and use [After Effects](#) to prepare the photo for a print project.

## Setting up your photo shoot

When you want to photograph something without a background, it is key (pun intended) to choose a solid background color that does not exist in your main subject. In fact, you want to choose a color that is the most opposite as possible — something on the opposite side of the color wheel.



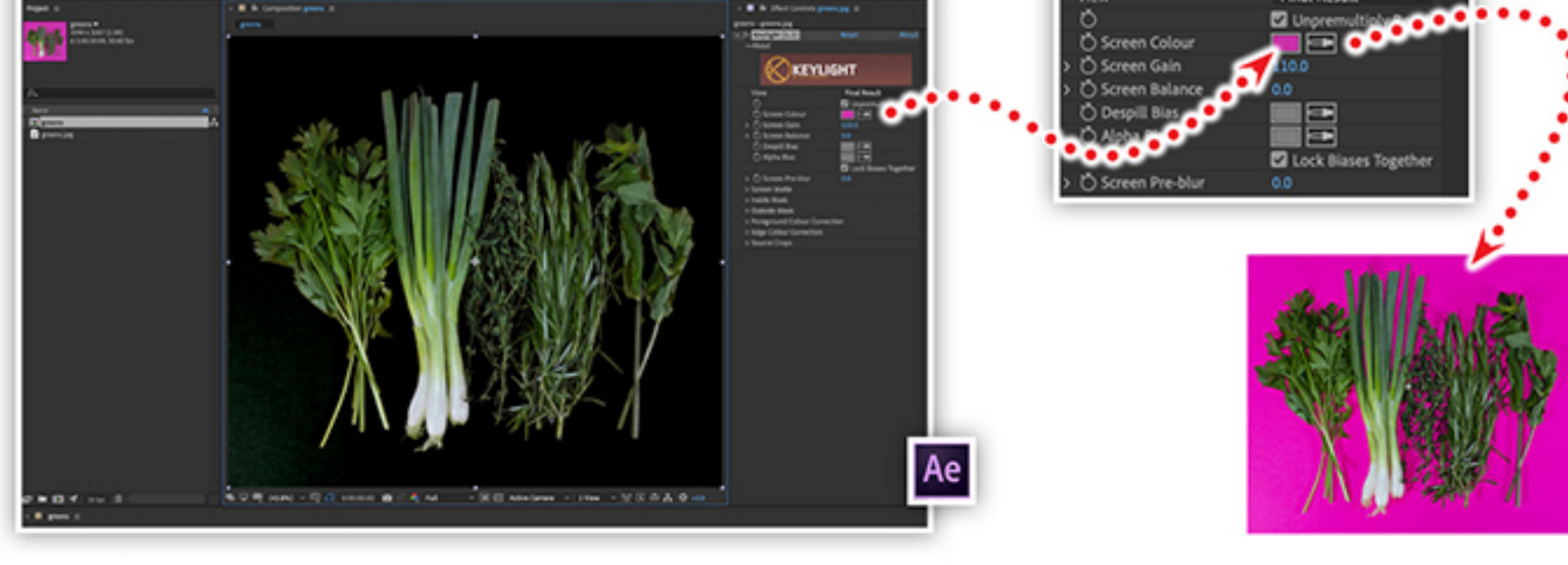
When shooting a subject for keying, choose a background color on the opposite end of the color spectrum for optimal results

In the example above, we want to photograph these ingredients without a background. This will give a lot more flexibility to move, scale, and position the ingredients on the book cover. Since the main color in the ingredients is green, we chose a bright pink color as the background. While this is not an aesthetically pleasing photograph, this does make the keying process (background removal) easier and more accurate.

## Keying (removing) the background color in After Effects

Both After Effects and [Premiere Pro](#) have some amazing keying tools for video production and editing. In the case of After Effects, we can save our work directly to a layered, fully transparent Photoshop file. This allows us to take advantage of keying tools in After Effects for a variety of design projects. To learn more about this process, check out [Photoshop + After Effects = Awesomeness](#).

To begin removing the background from our photo, start with a new After Effects project, and import the photo into a composition. Use the **New Composition From Footage** button from the **Composition** panel to automatically import the photo, create a composition, and add the photo to a layer in the **Timeline** panel.



Click the eye dropper icon to select the Screen Colour to key out of the image. Choose an area with no highlights or shadows.

Open the **Effects & Presets** panel and search for the effect named **Keylight 2.1**. Click and drag the effect from the list and drop it onto the photo layer in the **Timeline** panel, or onto the photo in the **Composition** panel. In the **Effect Controls** panel, click the eyedropper tool next to the Screen Color setting. With the eyedropper tool selected, click on an average area of the pink background, an area that doesn't contain any shadows or bright highlights.

Once selected, you'll see the background color of the composition showing through. Now, we can tweak the setting a bit to add or remove areas of the color being "keyed out." Next, we'll bring the screen gain up a little to 110, and lower the screen balance down to 0. Since we'll get a good "key" from using such an opposite color, the screen balance is not needed to counteract similar colors in the main image. As you use keying tools in future projects, you may need to make adjustments to the selected color, the screen gain, and screen balance in order to optimize the effect for different images.

## Exporting a transparent Photoshop file from After Effects

Now that we have removed the background from the photo, it is time to get the image back into Photoshop so we can use it in InDesign (or any other layout tool that supports PSD files). Select the composition panel in After Effects and make sure the preview resolution is set to full.



Export a Photoshop (PSD) file from After Effects by selecting the Composition panel and selecting **Save Frame As > Photoshop Layers** from the Composition menu

Resulting Photoshop file with the main subject separated from the background of the original photo

Photoshop file placed into InDesign for use in a book cover design.

From the **Composition** menu, choose **Save Frame As > Photoshop Layers**, then name and save your file. If you open the file in Photoshop, you'll see a layer containing your photo, with the background removed. Now we'll import the Photoshop file into InDesign, position, scale and rotate the file to the exact placement we need for our book cover.

## Learn even more techniques for using After Effects with print, web and photography projects

Have you downloaded *ALL* of the design tools from the Creative Cloud?

Supercharge any design project with stunning visual effects with After Effects. Join us as we attempt to leverage the power of After Effects to create unique artwork for print, web, illustration, and photography projects.

In the [After Effects for Print, Web, Photography, and more](#) webinar you'll learn to:

- Create your own custom artwork.
- Design jaw-dropping special effects fast.
- Generate custom textures and natural phenomena like rain and lightning.
- Achieve advanced transparency effects within your images.
- Export artwork to Photoshop — with layers and transparency.

*Adobe Creative Cloud e-learning series*

[After Effects for Print, Web, Photography, and more](#)

...

Topics in this article



## Recommended Articles



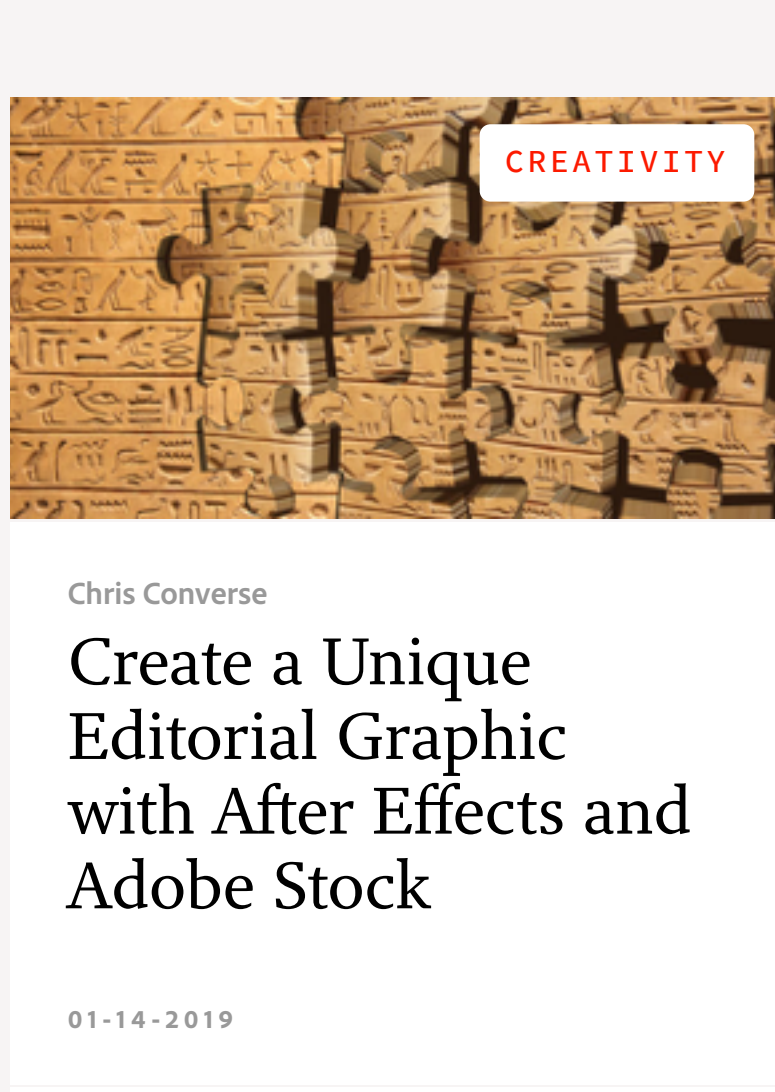
Chris Converse  
**Photoshop + After Effects = Awesomeness: Adobe MAX 2018 Lab Recap**

01-18-2019



Chris Converse  
**Dazzling Light Effects for Photography with After Effects**

03-09-2018



Chris Converse  
**Create a Unique Editorial Graphic with After Effects and Adobe Stock**

01-14-2019

